

## **2. Support Arizona's ECAP system**

**Vision: Each Arizona student, starting in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, is exposed to career opportunities and planning, and starts to develop a college and career portfolio through a strong school culture around Education Career Action Plans.**

### **National Drop-Out Prevention Category: Individualized Instruction (via Individualized Learning Plans)**

#### **Background:**

Career Action Plans are not a new concept. Many organizations assisting adults with career searches suggest various forms of action planning, including universities. At the high school level, an ECAP (Education and Career Action Plan) specifically refers to a student's current plan of coursework, career aspirations, and extended learning opportunities in order to develop the student's individual academic and career goals.

Ideally, the initial plan is developed in middle school and updated annually during high school and postsecondary years. The ECAP is intended to put the student in the "driver's seat" and is unique to the. Additionally it helps each student answer the questions; "Who am I?", "Where am I going?", "What do I need to get there?", "What are my next steps?"

Attributes of ECAPs include:

- Academic information and goals
  - Plan coursework
  - Meet high school requirements
  - Document postsecondary education goals
  - Review academic progress to include needed interventions or advisements
  - Record academic achievement or awards
- Career information and goals
  - Identify postsecondary career plans, options, interests or skills
  - Explore career opportunities
  - Explore needed educational requirements to meet the career option
- Postsecondary information and options
  - Explore admissions requirements
  - Complete necessary applications
  - Create a financial assistance plan
- Documentation of extra-curricular opportunities
  - Clubs, organizations, CTSO
  - Other leadership opportunities
  - Athletics / recreational
  - Fine arts opportunities
  - Community service or volunteer activities
  - Work experience, internship, job shadow

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- Other activities

ECAPs give educators an opportunity to develop personal relationships with all students, focus on student centered learning, deliver rigorous, engaging, essential instruction, and bring real world relevance to the academic and career education.

**Arizona Context:**

The Governor referred to ECAPS as “an effective tool in making education more meaningful and relevant to high school students” in her 2013 policy document.

Currently the Arizona State Board of Education requires schools to complete an ECAP for every student in grades 9-12 and that a parent review and sign the ECAP, effective for the graduating class of 2013. These requirements are part of State Board of Education rules, and not in state statute.

ECAP information is housed on AZCIS – or, career information system. In addition to Arizona, more than 20 states also use this system for their students. To get a school account, schools contact ADE for an assigned login. Once a school has their login, the school can assign students a user id and the student can access the AZCIS system to work on their ECAP from any computer. The login will stay with them after they exit the K-12 system. AZ CIS is also available through libraries and “One Stop” workforce centers, but the login can only be used for that location.

The AZCIS system allows for students to save copies of industry certificates, resumes, job exploration materials, coursework information, etc in one location.

Arizona pays \$100,000 per year for the CIS subscription for unlimited users up to age 21. Currently, the program is funded through the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) and a small partnership group. ADE pays for \$26,000 and the rest comes from partners. Adult services must pay a subscription fee for use of the system. ADE administers the program and provides professional development services to support its use within the schools. Some districts use different systems such as “Kudor” and some have build their own system as part of a parent portal.

Because ECAPs are part of SBE rule, Federal funding does not apply the way it would for a Title 1 program, etc. The funding is not guaranteed from year to year, which is a barrier to schools fully investing in the system use. They are hesitant to fully invest the time and effort to develop portfolios if they fear the system will go away.

The Arizona State Board for Charter Schools wrote the use of “education and career plans” into its performance management planning process, as part of documentation that schools are making progress on their graduation rate.

Other barriers to schools using ECAPs more regularly include:

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- School counselors are already overburdened. For example, Phoenix Union High School District has a student to counselor ratio of 1:300, and is considered good. Degree Phoenix is a partnership with the District, the City of Phoenix and others that will fund online counselor training developed by the Southern Regional Education Board
- Lack of expertise, particularly at small schools and charters
- Lack of information about benefits importance of embedding ECAPS in school culture
- Lack of industry awareness that students have portfolios with resumes and evidence that they have explored and understand their career choices
- Lack of data on depth of integration across high schools – need stronger implementation and enforcement. Data is currently tracked at ADE through the ALEAT system
- Lack of staff at ADE to fully develop integration tools (though the website is pretty thorough)

**Available Actions:**

- 1) Recommend to the Governor as a budget priority for state funding or develop a funding consortium
  - a) Goal is to create at least a 5 year guarantee so schools feel more comfortable signing up and provide consistency in integration
  - b) Budget = \$550,000 for yearly subscription for 5 years, plus 2 FTEs at ADE or consortium, travel and conference fees, communication materials and deployment – estimated total \$2.25 million
  - c) Be product agnostic – does not need to be AZCIS
  - d) Could do as a 1:1 match from a fiscal agent that would be a consortium lead, similar to “innovation grants.”
  - e) Work with ACA or other elements of the business community for funding and promote the ACA sectors within ECAP; additional financial partners could include DES, Local Workforce Investment Boards, libraries, etc. – create a statewide coalition of supporters to ensure sustainability and visibility
- 2) Convene experts and to develop tools to assist schools in integrating the ECAP process in all areas of high school life – starting as early as 6th grade; engage the business community to help counselors
- 3) Convene experts to develop a rubric to evaluate quality ECAPS
- 4) Create and maintain resource portal for schools to use to share high quality examples
- 5) Develop tools and a “speakers bureau” to share information about ECAPS at conferences and with other organizations – particularly business organizations
- 6) Develop a communication plan for the Governor, local businesses, and other education stakeholders to achieve statewide integration, visibility and support
  - a) Create a common theme: “Has your child done their ECAP?”; define “parent sign off” as an important step
  - b) “Get a path, get an annual tune-up with your parent and counselor”
- 7) Add counselors, or trained paraprofessionals, mobile career centers, perhaps using workforce funding
- 8) Develop metrics around the % of students completing ECAPS, and set goals for completion and institutionalizing